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Compensation discrimination in the NFL: an analysis of career earnings

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Abstract

Using NFL data from 2000 to 2008, we test for compensation discrimination on career earnings in the NFL. We use both the traditional dummy variable technique applied to Ordinary Least Squares regression and the quantile regression analysis to measure the effect of race on earnings. We focus on six positional groups: defensive backs, defensive linemen, linebackers, running backs, tight ends and wide receivers. Our analysis finds that a player's performance determines career earnings and not their race. Perhaps, using a Becker-like argument, market competition for the best players in a competitive environment to achieve a winning team has overcome personal prejudice.

Keywords:

NFL

discrimination

compensation discrimination

discrimination in career earnings

Notes

- ¹ Players are excluded from the sample if a season is missing or skipped in the USA Today’s NFL salary database (content.usatoday.com/sportsdata/football/nfl/salaries/team) or if their salary is not available in this database.
- ² All undrafted players are assigned a draft number that is one digit higher than that of the last player taken in the draft.
- ³ 98.5% of the nonwhite offensive players and 97% of the defensive players are black and the remainder are Pacific Islanders.

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